

Message Text

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS ACTION NIACT IMMEDIATE TO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI, US

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD SECRETARY'S VISIT TO AFRICA

REF: (A) SECTO 11241 (B) LAGOS 5087 (C) LAGOS 5054

SUMMARY: SINCE LAST JULY'S COUP WHICH OVERTHREW GOWON, THE NEW NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP HAS PUT SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON AGGRESSIVE DIPLOMACY. MUCH OF THIS DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY HAS BEEN FACT FINDING OR FOCUSED ON BILATERAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES, BUT NIGERIAN EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE OTHER GOVERNMENTS ON BROADER POLICY MATTERS HAVE FORMED AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH. THE FMG HAS NOT HESITATED TO SPEAK OUT WHEN IT HAS DISAGREED WITH THE U.S. AS IT HAS ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES. THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH DISAGREEMENT PRODUCED FMG SKEPTICISM REGARDING PURPOSES OF THE SECRETARY'S TRIP. THIS SKEPTICISM WAS WITHOUT DOUBT COMMUNICATED TO OTHER AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. HOEVER, GIVEN THE VERY FAVORABLE REACTION TO THE SECRETARY'S SPEECH THROUGHOUT AFRICA AND THE PRPOITIOUS INITIAL REACTION HERE, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR PURSUIT OF THE INITIATIVES LISTED IN THE TEN-POINT PROGRAM ON RHODESIA WILL IMPROVE THE FMG'S ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S./AFRICAN POLICY.

END SUMMARY.

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1. ANALYSIS OF RECENT NIGERIAN DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY INDICATES

THAT SINCE IT SEIZED POWER IN THE JULY 1975 COUP THE FMG HAS PURSUED THE FOLLOWING PRIORITY FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES DEVELOPED BY THE MUHAMMED ADMINISTRATION AND UNCHANGED SINCE MUHAMMED'S ASSASSINATION IN FEBRUARY 1976.

- (A) TO MAINTAIN FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH MAJOR NATIONS IMPORTANT TO NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE OF TRADE, TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING OR OTHER REASONS;
- (B) TO END MINORITY RULE IN AFRICA;
- (C) TO ASSERT A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE OAU AND IN THE NON-ALIGNED WORLD;
- (D) TO CONSOLIDATE NIGERIAN PRIMACY IN WEST AFRICAN/REGIONAL AFFAIRS;
- (E) TO IMPROVE THE TERMS OF TRADE BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED AND THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

2. IN FURTHERANCE OF THESE OBJECTIVES, THE MUHAMMED/OBASANJO REGIME HAS RELIED HEAVILY ON PERSONAL DIPLOMACY. THE REGIME'S PRIMARY MOTIVATION HAS BEEN A DESIRE TO REPLACE GOWON'S LOW KEY INTERNATIONAL STATESMANSHIP WITH A MORE ACTIVIST RECORD OF ITS OWN. IN PURSUIT OF THIS, FMG LEADERS HAVE BEEN NOTABLY PERIPATETIC IN THEIR EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND TO COORDINATE POLICY POSITION ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO NIGERIA (E.G., NIGERIAN ACTIVITY DURING THE ANGOLAN CRISIS). THIS DRIVE HAS COME ACROSS AS RATHER HAM-HANDED DUE TO NATURAL NIGERIAN ASSERTIVENESS AND THE FMG'S BELIEF THAT NIGERIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE MORE CLOSELY LINKED WITH AFRICA-WIDE DEVELOPMENTS THAN THOSE OF MANY OF NIGERIA'S AFRICAN BROTHERS. THE NEW LEADERS SEE THIS MORE AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY AS A LOGICAL INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPART TO THEIR AMBITIOUS ATTEMPT ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT TO REMEDY THE MANAGEMENT INADEQUACIES OF THE REGIME THEY TOPPLED. UNLIKE THE GOWON ADMINISTRATION, THE COUNTRY'S PRESENT LEADERSHIP HAS NOT HESITATED TO LEAN ON SMALLER AFRICAN STATES. THIS HAS LED TO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RESENTMENT AND SNIPING AT NIGERIA. THERE HAVE BEEN DIFFERENCES WITH ZAIRE, SENEGAL AND OTHERS OVER ANGOLA; WITH SENEGAL OVER THE INCLUSION OF ARAB OAU STATES IN THE SECOND WORLD FESTIVAL OF AFRICAN ART AND CULTURE (FESTAC); AND WITH SENEGAL AND OTHERS OVER THE QUESTION OF THE EXPANSION OF THE WEST AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (ECOWAS) TO INCLUDE A FRANCOPHONE COUNTERWEIGHT TO NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC MIGHT.

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3. THE FAST EVOLVING SOUTHERN AFRICAN SCENE HAS FROM THE BEGINNING PRESENTED A SPECIAL CHALLENGE AND ATTRACTION FOR AN IMMATURE FOREIGN MINISTER AND AN INSECURE TEAM OF MILITARY COLLEAGUES LOOKING FOR EXTERNAL DISTRACTIONS FROM INTERNAL PROBLEMS. SOME OF THE FMG'S RECENT MISSIONS TO OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE APPEARED TO BE PRIMARILY FACT-FINDING. SEVERAL MISSIONS TO MAPUTO HAVE BEEN CONCERNED WITH DETERMINING HOW NIGERIA MIGHT BEST ASSIST MOZAMBIQUE AFTER MACHEL CLOSED THE

BORDER WITH RHODESIA. GARBA STATED HIS MOST RECENT SWING THROUGH LUSAKA, MAPUTO AND DAR-ES-SALAAM WAS MADE TO ASSESS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE AREA AND DISCUSS THE RHODIESIAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE WITH "FRONT LINE" AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. NOW HE IS OFF TO LIBYA, REPORTEDLY TO DISCUSS "PROPOSALS FOR LIBERATION STRATEGY" FOR SOUTHER AFRICA. A NUMBER OF TO-AND-FROS HAVE BEEN DEVOTED TO SETTING UP EMBASSIES IN LUANDA AND MAPUTO AND TO THE WORKING OUT OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ANGOLA, THE PRODUCT OF NIGERIA'S CHAMPIONING OF THE MPLA LAST YEAR.

4. OTHER MISSIONS HAVE BEEN FOCUSED ON SPECIFIC BILATERAL PROBLEMS THAT THE FMG WANTED TO RESOLVE RATHER THAN ALLOW TO CONTINUE TO FESTER. SUCH ISSUES HAVE INCLUDED THE MILLION NIGERIANS LIVING IN THE SUDAN AND THE STATUS OF SEVERAL THOUSAND NIGERIAN LABORERS IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA. RECENT MISSIONS TO GUINEA-BISSAU AND CAPE VERDE REFLECT COMMITMENTS TO SUPPORT OF NEWLY INDEPENDENT TERRITORIES BY A COUNTRY WITH FUNDS IT CAN USE FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES AND FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF ITS OWN LEADERSHIP ASPIRATIONS. QUESTIONS CONCERNING FESTAC AND ECOWAS HAVE RECENTLY PRODUCED A SPATE OF VISITATIONS AND RETURN VISITATIONS.

NIGERIA HAS ALSO PLAYED AN ACTIVE ROLE IN NORMALIZING TOGO/BEININ RELATIONS.

5. THE BILATERAL U.S.-NIGERIAN RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN MARRED BY

DIFFERENCES PRIMARILY ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS. THESE DIFFERENCES ARE OF LONG STANDING, AS GOWON, ARIKPO AND OTHERS EXPRESSED THEIR CLEAR DISAGREEMENT WITH OUR POLICY ON SOUTHERN AFRICA LONG BEFORE THE JULY 1975 COUP. THE MUHAMMED/OBASANJO REGIME HAS BEEN MUCH MORE OUTSPOKEN AND ACTIVIST IN OPPOSING THAT POLICY, AND IT CLEARLY FOUND THIS A POLITICALLY CONVENIENT ISSUE

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OVER WHICH IT COULD WHIP UP NEEDED ENTHUSIASM AND UNITY AT HOME AND BUILD AN IMAGE ABROAD OF NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENCE AND MAJORITY RULE. NIGERIAN VIEWS WERE SET FORTH MOST FORCEFULLY IN THE INTEMPERATE REJECTION OF PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER ON ANGOLA, IN MUHAMMED'S SPEECH AT THE OAU ADDIS SUMMIT IN JANUARY AND IN AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN'S OVERBAROD ATTACH ON AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS HISTORY OF POLICY DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND FMG, THE NIGERIANS VIEWED THE PURPOSES OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM, AND DOUBTLESS COMMUNICATED THIS SKEPTICISM AND SUSPICION TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF COUNTRIES ON THE SECRETARY'S ITINERARY. HOWEVER, IF THE FMG WAS INDEED ENGAGED IN A CONSCIOUS CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT OR SABOTAGE THE SECRETARY'S TRIP, THE FAVORABLE RESPONSE ACROSS THE CONTINENT TO THE LUSAKA SPEECH SOULD BY NOW INSTRUCT THE FMG ON THE FALLACIES

OF SUCH A STRATEGY. GARBA'S FAVORABLE, THOUGH CAUTIOUS AND CONDITIONED REACTION TO THE SPEECH (LAGOS 5106) STRUCK US AS HONEST AND STRAGHT-FORWARD AND MAY WELL PRESAGE A MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S./AFRICAN POLICY.

6. THE CRUX OF THE MATTER, AS WE SEE IT, IS TIMING: THE NIGERIAN POSITION AND ACTIVITIES WERE CLEARLY AT VARIANCE WITH OURS BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S LUSAKA SPEECH; THE KEY QUESTION NOW IS WHAT THEIR ATTITUDES AND ACTIVITIES WILL BE ONCE THE CONTENT OF THE SECRETARY'S SPEECH SINKS IN.
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